

Weekly Recap: We Are Not of This World: Aliens & Strangers

Jared began with a reading from **I Peter 2:9-11**:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles ("aliens and strangers"), to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

As Jared began, many began to sing. Soon, all of our congregation began singing along, while Jared waited. (I did notice that Jared himself got caught up with the singing and sang for a bit.) This was an intentional example of how five percent of a crowd can impact the behavior of the entire group. Another example is how we often dress with an eye to blending in with the appropriate crowd. A despair.com poster has a fitting quote: "when free to do anything we want, we usually imitate others.) Psychologists refer this to the "herd mentality". Our kingdom's call to live as "aliens and strangers" runs counter to this natural instinct.

This world, in its present form, is not our home. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are not of this world, serving in a kingdom that is not of this world, and led by a King that is not of this world. Look at Romans 12:1-2 from The Message:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

And now, look back to where we left off in I Peter 2:12:

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

We "amen" this all the time with regard to the behavior of others, especially our teens. We need to read this and ***apply it to ourselves***.

We tend to shy away from the language "aliens and strangers" because of what it connotes in our world. We need to embrace the language—not to be different for the sake of being different, but to be righteous among the unrighteous. Jared then took us to John 17:13-19:

*"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **They are not of the world,** even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

We are to be lanterns lighting the way, not spotlights shone in the faces of the lost.

"Light does its best work in the darkness."

How does this show itself true in our culture today?

How do our conversations, social media posts, and effort in understanding others demonstrate our kingdom priorities?

Scot McKnight says, in *Kingdom Conspiracy*, that God is unique among Kings, in that he "redeems his people first, before he rules them."

Jared closed with the words of **Hosea 2:23**:

I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'

How will you live out your life as a part of the people of God?